IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Original) Method for comparing a first content with a second content to determine whether the contents are identical, the method comprising the steps of:

identifying a protocol encoding the first content and second content;

computing a first signature of the first content and a second signature of the second content; and

comparing the first computed signature with the second signature to determine whether the first content is identical to the second content.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

selecting a first set of data segments from the first content and a second set of data segments from the second content; and

using the selected first set of data segments and the second set of data segments to compute the first signature and the second signature.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the selected first set of data segments and second set of data segments comprise locations associated with one or more protocol markers.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of computing the signature of the first content and the signature of the second content further comprises the steps of:

identifying one or more protocol markers associated with the first content; and

identifying one or more protocol markers associated with the second content.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the first content comprises discrete cosine coefficients.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the second content comprises discrete cosine coefficients.

7. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the first content comprises motion vectors.

8. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the second content comprises motion vectors.

9. (Original) The method of claim 4 further comprising the steps of:
identifying a length of the first content; and
identifying a length of the second content.

10. (Previously Presented) A content comparator executing on a computer, the content comparator adapted to compare first content with a second content, the comparator comprising:
a protocol identification module configured to identify a first protocol associated with the first content and a second protocol associated with the second content;
a plurality of data segmentation modules configured to select a set of data segments from each of the first content and the second content;
a plurality of signature computation modules configured to generate a first signature of the first content and a second signature of the second content; and
a signature comparison module configured to compare the first signature with the second signature.

11. (Original) An apparatus for comparing a first content with a second content, the apparatus comprising:
means for identifying a protocol encoding the first content and the second content;

means for selecting a set of data segments from the first content and the second content;

means for computing a signature of the first content and a signature of the second content; and

means for comparing the computed signature of the first content with the computed signature of the second content.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the selected data segments comprises locations associated with one or more protocol markers.

13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the means for computing the signature of the first content and the signature of the second content further comprises:

means for identifying one or more protocol markers associated with the first content; and

means for identifying one or more protocol markers associated with the second content.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the first content comprises discrete cosine coefficients.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the second content comprises discrete cosine coefficients.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the first content comprises motion vectors.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the second content comprises motion vectors.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 13 further comprises:
means for identifying a length of the first content; and
means for identifying a length of the second content.

19. (Original) A method to compare a first content with a second content in a network storage environment, the method comprising the steps of:
receiving the first content;
computing a signature of the first content;
comparing the computed signature of the first content with a signature of the second content; and
identifying, if the computed signature of the first content matches the signature of the second content, that the first content is identical to the second content.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the step of computing the signature of the first further comprises the steps of:
identifying a set of protocol markers associated with the content; and
generating the signature from the identified set of protocol markers.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the set of protocol markers further comprise a set of discrete cosine coefficients.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20 wherein the set of protocol markers further comprises one or more motion vectors.

23. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein a size of the received content is utilized in creating the signature.

24. (Original) A method for identifying content using a protocol associated with the content as a signature, the method comprising the steps of:

determining the protocol associated with the content;

identifying a set of markers associated with the protocol;

obtaining a set of markers from the content using the set of marker associated with the protocol; and

generating a signature of the content using the identified markers.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the identified markers are within a subset of the entire content.

26. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein a size associated with the content is utilized to uniquely identify the content.

27. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the signature is utilized in a network caching device to determine whether data should be forwarded from the network caching device.

28. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the signature is utilized to determine if a local copy of the content should be accessed.

29. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the signature is utilized to determine if a remote copy of the content should be accessed.

30. (Previously Presented) A protocol marker identifier executing on a computer for generating a signature of a content comprising:

a data segmentation module configured to select a set of data segments from the content; and

a signature computation module configured to generate the signature from the set of data segments.

31. (Previously Presented) The protocol marker identifier of claim 30 further comprising a protocol identification module configured to identify a protocol associated with the content.

32. (Previously Presented) The protocol marker identifier of claim 30 wherein the signature comprises a set of protocol markers.

33. (Original) The protocol marker identifier of claim 32 wherein the set of protocol markers comprises a set of discrete cosine transform coefficients.

34. (Original) A network caching device adapted to utilize a signature associated with a protocol for caching decisions, the network caching device comprising:

means for determining a protocol of new contents;

means for computing a signature of the content; and

means for comparing the computed signature of the new content with a signature of other content.

35. (Previously Presented) The network caching device of claim 34 wherein the means for computing a signature further comprises:

means for identifying a set of markers associated with the protocol associated with the content; and

means for obtaining appropriate markers associated with the content.

Please add new claims 36 *et al.*

36. (New) A method, comprising:

identifying a protocol encoding of a first content and a second content;

identifying a first signature of the first content and a second signature of the second content, wherein each signature contains one or more protocol markers identifying the content;

comparing one or more protocol markers within the first signature and the second signature to determine whether the first content is identical to the second content; and

terminating transmission of the second content, if the first content and the second content are identical.

37. (New) The method of claim 36, further comprising:

computing the first signature of the first content as the first content is converted from raw data to the protocol; and

computing the second signature of the second content as the second content is converted from raw data to the protocol.

38. (New) The method of claim 36, further comprising:

continuing transmission of the second content, if the first content and the second content are not identical.

39. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the first content comprises discrete cosine coefficients.

40. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the second content comprises discrete cosine coefficients.

41. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the first content comprises motion vectors.

42. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein the one or more protocol markers associated with the second content comprises motion vectors.

43. (New) The method of claim 36, further comprising:

identifying a length of the first content; and

identifying a length of the second content.

44. (New) A method, comprising:

determining a protocol of a new content;

computing a signature of the new content;

comparing the computed signature of the new content with other content stored in a network cache to determine if the new content is identical to any the other content on the network cache; and

terminating transmission of the new content, if the new content is identical any other content on the network cache.

45. (New) The method of claim 44, further comprising:

continuing transmission of the new content, if the new content is not identical to any other content within the network cache.

46. (New) The network caching device of claim 44 wherein the step of computing a signature further comprises:

identifying a set of markers associated with the protocol associated with the content; and

obtaining appropriate markers associated with the content.